

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

Annapolis Human Relations Commission

This past year, the Annapolis Human Relations Commission received and dealt with an above average number of complaints of discrimination, including a fair housing dispute which necessitated a public hearing. The Commission also held its first “dialogue project” designed to encourage communication between the residents of the City’s public housing communities and those in adjacent neighborhoods. The Commission also continued to engage in activities intended to raise its profile in the community and thereby increase awareness among City residents about its efforts to eliminate racial and other forms of discrimination and to promote equal opportunity.

Complaints

The Commission fielded six complaints in 2010:

- A woman alleged that she was the victim of discrimination in housing on the basis of disability when a local condominium association denied her request to have a dog as an “emotional support animal” as an exception to its “no pet” policy. When mediation proved not to be a possibility, the Commission initiated an investigation consistent with its authority in City Code. The Commission determined that a *prima facie* case had been made that there was a violation of the City’s fair housing ordinance. The Commission held a 5 ½ hour public hearing on the merits of the complaint. The Commission twice postponed a meeting to discuss and render a decision on the complaint at the request of the attorneys of the parties but intends to conclude action on the case early in 2011.
- A resident of an Annapolis condominium filed a complaint related to the payment of fees. Members of the Commission’s Complaints Committee spoke with the parties and subsequently determined that an agreement had been reached. The Commission concluded that no further action on its part was needed.
- A customer at a pawn shop in Annapolis reported that he had heard an employee making insensitive remarks to other workers because they were speaking in Spanish. The Commission’s vice chair had a conversation with the owner of this establishment about the incident, who promised that he would take action with his staff on the matter.
- A man claimed discrimination in employment on the basis of mental disability when an Annapolis convenience store declined to hire him for a coffee-making position. The establishment declined to mediate the dispute. The chair of the Commission’s Complaints Committee is exploring alternative ways to help this person in his pursuit of a job.
- A customer at an Annapolis restaurant alleged that he was removed forcibly from the establishment by the bartender due to a misunderstanding. The Commission received statements from the proprietor of the restaurant that provided a very different account of the episode. The proprietor offered to exchange mutual apologies with the other party. The

Commission informed both individuals that a conversation between the two of them represented the best way to resolve the conflict.

- A City of Annapolis employee claimed that the City eliminated her job despite a ruling in her favor by the Civil Service Board. Noting that she had filed an appeal with the Civil Service Board, that it had scheduled a hearing on her case, and that she could take the issue to court, the Commission chair in consultation with the Commission's staff liaison advised her that she should exhaust these avenues before involving the Commission.

Dialogue Project

The Commission initiated a project designed to engage residents of the City's six public housing developments in a conversation with their neighbors in surrounding communities. The goals of these "dialogue sessions", which are to be two hours in length and facilitated by members of the Commission, are to identify issues of common concern and develop collaborative activities to resolve problems. Participation is to be limited and equally balanced to keep the conversation manageable and to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to offer their views. The first dialogue was held between residents of Eastport Terrace/Harbour House and members of the Eastport Civic Association. About 25 persons, equally reflective of the two communities, took part in a lively conversation that focused largely on concerns about how to engage youth in productive activities and provide meaningful outlets for them. As a result of the discussion, representatives from the two communities have held several follow-up sessions and the conversation is continuing. The Commission is working to organize several more dialogue projects in 2011.

Television Show

The Commission continued its half-hour show on City of Annapolis Television. The program, *Annapolis Mosaics*, spotlights people in the community who are involved in activities designed to promote good human relations. The chair of the Commission has served as host. This year's guests:

- Persons offering three perspectives about public housing in Annapolis: Trudy McFall, chair and founder of Homes for America; Robert Eades, community activist and owner of Neat & Kleen Taxi Company; and Dick Callahan, a member of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis
- Rob Levit, founding director of Creating Communities
- Melissa Yanowitz, coordinator of Annapolis Employment Forum
- Sascha Lipczenko, director of youth services with the Community Action Agency of Anne Arundel County
- Organizers of and participants in the Family Night program at Eastport Terrace/Harbour House sponsored by Eastport Civic Association
- Jennifer Bistrack, community health and aquatics coordinator of the Annapolis Department of Recreation and Parks

Meetings

Many of the Commission's meetings featured presentations by invited speakers, enabling both sides to become familiar with the services offered by the other. Those addressing the Commission in 2010 were a commissioner of the Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis about the appeals process for individuals expelled from public housing, an officer of the Annapolis Police Department about the Citizens Police Academy, the director of the Annapolis Department of Recreation and Parks about the Roger "Pip" Moyer Recreation Center (including a tour of the facility), and the executive director of Centro de Ayuda about the work of this organization to assist Latino residents.

Other Activities

- The Commission presented its 2010 Martin Luther King Jr. Award to Jean Adams, founder of Friendly Haven, and Humanitarian/Outstanding Student Awards to seniors at Annapolis and St. Mary's High Schools.
- The Commission's vice chair served as a member of the City's 2010 Census Complete Count Committee.
- The chair of the Commission's Outreach Committee made a presentation about the Commission to the Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities, participated in a workshop about tenant/landlord issues related to fair housing, and presented testimony on behalf of the Commission before the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in support of legislation that would have added "source of income" to the State's fair housing law.
- The Commission chair participated in a meeting at the request of the Mayor about the relationship between the Clay Street community and the Annapolis Police Department.
- The Commission received an introduction to the Alternatives to Violence program and, at the request of the organizers, became a sponsor.
- The Commission vice chair participated in the Citizens Police Academy sponsored by the Annapolis Police Department.
- Six Commissioners took part in an annual statewide training for human relations staff and board members organized by the Maryland Association of Human Rights Agencies. The Commission had the largest number of participants of any single jurisdiction.

2010 Meeting Attendance Record of Commissioners

	February	March	April	May	June	September	November	December
Keller	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mitchell	X	X	X	E	X	X	E	E
Leitch	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sims	X	X	X	X	X	E		X
Schenck	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X
Mendelman	E	X	Resigned					
Katchmar	X	X	E	E	E	X	X	X
Scott	X	X	X	E	X	E	X	X
Soin	X	X	X	X	X	E	E	E
Boston	X		X	X	X	E		
Doskow	E	X	X	X	X	X	E	E
Spencer	*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Graham	*	*	X	E	X	X	X	X
Williams	*	*	X	X		X	X	E
Kaisler	Not yet serving						X	E
Knight	Not yet serving							X

Key:

X – Attended

E – Excused absence

* -- Not Yet Serving